

*Company of Young Canadians Act*

violent opposition to this sort of cultural invasion.

This idea, like so many other ideas that are borrowed from a culture that is not identical to ours—there are fundamental differences between Canada and the United States—was doomed to failure right from the beginning. It was said during the debate in this chamber setting up the CYC that Canada has had right from the beginning of settlement an enviable reputation for voluntary activity in handling the problem of social policy. Religious movements such as the Jesuits, the Grenfell Mission in Labrador, the Frontier College, the Salvation Army are typical. CUSO, Canadian University Students Overseas program, predated the programs which were later launched in the United States. I would venture to say the source of inspiration for some of the youth programs that were launched in the United States under the Kennedy administration came from the strong spirit of motivation of such volunteer groups. Because of this there was little room for a government-sponsored agency of the kind that we have come to know the Company of Young Canadians to be.

Over the years in this House ideas have been brought forward for the involvement of youth in participatory democracy. This was particularly true with regard to the events surrounding our centennial celebrations. I, along with many other hon. members of the House of Commons—some of whom are no longer present—enthusiastically embraced the idea of a youth parliament for Canada which would have had its beginning during our centennial celebrations. An inter-party committee studied this subject for some months and there was general agreement that the best means of getting Canadian youth involved in the political affairs of our nation was through the instrumentality of a representative youth parliament. For some reason the Liberal government of that day sank this idea beyond trace, notwithstanding the unanimous support for the idea, and Canada has not yet been successful in organizing a youth parliament. Instead, favoured treatment through funds, effort and governmental support was given to the ill-fated idea of the Company of Young Canadians.

I still keep in touch with young people across the country who are interested in being involved in some form of youth parliament. I know that in the true tradition of voluntary activity on the part of both young and older Canadians, they are still hopeful

[Mr. Dinsdale.]

that they will be able to get a youth parliament organized on a voluntary basis. They have even looked to the government for a contribution to a foundation fund that would provide some financial support to an idea of this kind.

● (4:10 p.m.)

I think we would all agree, in our retrospective wisdom, that a youth parliament would have had a much more beneficial effect, both for Canada and for Canadian youth, than the sad story of confusion, chaos and maladministration that has marked the trail of the CYC. That it was moving into areas that it could never occupy, areas that were already well filled by voluntary groups, is the reason the CYC never sent volunteers beyond Canadian shores. The legislation provided that this was to be one of its functions. The reason it never moved into the field of foreign service is that this area is already more than adequately covered by the voluntary university group, CUSO. It is significant that one of the committee's recommendations was that the CYC's ambitions in this regard be formally withdrawn in any rewriting of the act.

Unfortunately, the same haste and lack of planning that has dogged the footsteps of the CYC and the attempt of the government to get youth involved in public activities has marked this further review, this continuing agonizing reappraisal of the whole concept. Those of us who sat on the committee were under the pressure of a restricted time limit, having to bring in a report by December 5. As a result, the committee was transformed into a sort of robot. We had to meet that deadline regardless how deeply we probed in coming to grips with the multitude of problems confronting the CYC.

As a result of this, the committee's investigation turned out to be a fiasco. We changed the chairman in the course of our deliberations. Mr. Saulnier, whose charges arising from the unhappy events in Montreal on October 7 led to the committee inquiry, was supposed to have been the chief witness. Instead he was the last. He raised more questions than were answered. He made charges that could not be substantiated because of the very nature of the committee's restrictive terms of reference. As a result, the entire effort was abortive and created problems rather than solving them.

There was also selectivity in the calling of witnesses. This was demonstrated by the fact